

To: Kulpan, Bruce[Kulpan.Bruce@epa.gov]; Madigan, Andrea[Madigan.Andrea@epa.gov]
From: McCullough, Mary
Sent: Mon 8/10/2015 1:32:26 PM
Subject: RE: Animas River Release - Information Request

Article in today's BNA on the spill – posted August 7. Mary

http://news.bna.com/deln/DELNWB/split_display.adp?fedfid=73877510&vname=dennotallissues&jd=a0h1b4cc

EPA Triggers Mine Waste Release Into Animas River

By Tripp Baltz

Aug. 7 — The Environmental Protection Agency accidentally triggered a 1 million gallon release of toxic mine waste water into a tributary of the Animas River in southwest Colorado, sending an orange-tinted pulse of contaminated water, sediment and metals down the river.

An EPA and Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety team caused the spill Aug. 5 while working to investigate and remediate contamination at the Gold King Mine near the upper portions of Cement Creek in San Juan County. All of the workers on site were unharmed.

The primary environmental concern in the spill is the pulse of contaminated water containing sediment and metals flowing as discharge downstream through Cement Creek and into the Animas River. The Animas River flows through Durango, Colo., and into New Mexico, where it merges with the San Juan River. The San Juan then flows into Utah, where it empties into the Colorado River at Lake Powell.

Water Users Notified

The Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment has notified water users downstream of the release so they can take appropriate steps to turn off intakes until the contaminated water passes.

Due to current and longstanding water quality impairment associated with heavy metals, there are no fish populations in the Cement Creek watershed, and populations in the Animas River have historically been impaired for several miles downstream of Silverton, Colo., the EPA said in a statement.

Silverton doesn't take water out of the affected portions of Cement Creek. Over the next several days, EPA teams will be sampling and investigating downstream locations to confirm the release has passed and poses no additional concerns for aquatic life or water users.

Risks at Abandoned Mines

"This unfortunate incident underscores the very reason EPA and the State of Colorado are focused on addressing the environmental risks at abandoned mine sites," said David Ostrander, director of EPA's emergency response program at the agency's Region 8 Office in Denver.

"We are thankful that the personnel working on this mine cleanup project were unharmed," he said. "EPA will be assessing downstream conditions to ensure any impacts and concerns are addressed, as necessary."

The Center for Biological Diversity issued a statement Aug. 6 saying the EPA was downplaying the possibility of impacts to fish and wildlife from the spill.

The San Juan River contains habitat for several species of federally endangered fish and birds, the group said.

"Many of these, including razorback suckers and Colorado pikeminnow, are already afflicted by exposure to toxic compounds, such as selenium and mercury, associated with mine waste," it said.

"The fact that fish populations in the upper Animas have already been decimated by mining pollution offers no comfort to concerns about pollution impacts farther downstream," Taylor McKinnon, spokesman for the group, said in the statement.

To contact the reporter on this story: Tripp Baltz in Denver at abaltz@bna.com

To contact the editor responsible for this story: Larry Pearl at lpearl@bna.com

For More Information

The EPA's website on the Upper Animas Mining District is available at <http://www2.epa.gov/region8/upper-animas-mining-district>.

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From: Kulpan, Bruce
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2015 9:10 AM
To: McCullough, Mary; Madigan, Andrea
Cc: Mackey, Cyndy; DeLeon, Rafael; Patterson, Kenneth; Lammie, Benjamin; Hautamaki, Jared; Motto, Brian; Thompson, BrianK
Subject: RE: Animas River Release - Information Request

Mary,

Thank you. I sent a request for information to Region 8 since it is my understanding that the release occurred from a Colorado mine.

Bruce

From: McCullough, Mary
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2015 8:52 AM
To: Kulpan, Bruce; Madigan, Andrea
Cc: Mackey, Cyndy; DeLeon, Rafael; Patterson, Kenneth; Lammie, Benjamin; Hautamaki, Jared; Motto, Brian; Thompson, BrianK
Subject: RE: Animas River Release - Information Request

Bruce – Region 6 issued a press release on Saturday and media conference call is scheduled for today at 3 pm to discuss the potential impact in New Mexico. No other press is available from the Agency's website at this time. Link to R6 press release follows. Mary

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/d0cf6618525a9efb85257359003fb69d/d6426e2ef06f547885257e9b00>

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From: Kulpan, Bruce
Sent: Monday, August 10, 2015 8:28 AM
To: Madigan, Andrea
Cc: Mackey, Cyndy; DeLeon, Rafael; Patterson, Kenneth; Lammie, Benjamin; Hautamaki, Jared; McCullough, Mary
Subject: Animas River Release - Information Request

Andrea,

Good morning. The release of mine waste water into the Animas River over the weekend is prominent in the national news here.

In anticipation of OECA upper management requesting information on the release, can you please send me any information the Region has developed concerning the release, e.g. a press release and/or any briefing papers of upper management.

Thank you,

Bruce